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ACTION AF-00

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NSCE-00 OIC-00 OMB-00 NIMA-00 PA-00 MCC-00 PER-00  
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FM AMEMBASSY NDJAMENA  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2567  
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AMEMBASSY LONDON  
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SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF, AF/C, PRM, DRL, INR; LONDON AND PARIS FOR  
AFRICAWATCHERS; GENEVA FOR CAMPBELL, ADDIS/NAIROBI/KAMPALA  
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SUBJECT: CENTRAL AFRICAN REFUGEES: PRM VISITS CAMPS IN  
SOUTHERN CHAD

REF: NDJAMENA 1616

1. Summary. PRM/AFR Mary Lange (Deputy Director of the Africa Office) and Neil Ahlsten (Chad/Darfur Program Officer) traveled to southern Chad from October 10-15 to visit the refugee camps in Amboko and Yaroungou. The visit was prompted by the arrival of an estimated 10,700 new refugees from the Central African Republic to Amboko camp since June 2005. Amboko and Yaroungou camps now host a combined 40,000 CAR refugees who are supported by UNHCR, Cooperazione Internazionale, African Concern and Africare. Several hundred additional CAR refugees recently arrived at the border. UNHCR believes that refugee inflows will fall in the coming months. UNHCR and its partners at Amboko were caught off guard by the new inflows, and the initial registration and basic service provision were poor. UNHCR has since improved its operations considerably through the support of an Emergency Response Team. UNHCR is in the process of establishing a new refugee camp at Gondje, with a contribution of Euro 2 million from ECHO, that should further ameliorate the situation. CARE will be the lead implementing partner and assume camp management, while MSF will provide health services. Africare will provide support for agriculture and income-generating activities. UNHCR's budget needs for Gondje have been met by the ECHO contribution, but additional support for ongoing programs in Amboko and Yaroungou is still required for UNHCR and WFP. End Summary.

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Refugee Background, Locations, and Numbers  
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2. In 2003, pockets of insecurity developed in northern CAR after current President Bozize took power. Since then, a small number of armed groups are suspected of operating in the area, including 'loyalists' of the Patisse regime, military deserters and highway robbers. Economic insecurity and poor agricultural production in northern CAR may have exacerbated this instability. The first caseload of CAR refugees arrived in southern Chad in 2003. UNHCR established Amboko camp near the town of Gore and Yaroungou camp near the town of Danamadji. The situation remained relatively stable until June 2005, when unidentified armed groups attacked villages in northern CAR, precipitating the new influx of refugees into southern Chad. The most recent attack occurred on September 27, when a group of unidentified armed men attacked a small military post in the village of Markounda and displaced its 1,500 inhabitant.

3. UNHCR's latest statistics indicate that there are 24,526

refugees at Amboko camp and 15,000 refugees at Yaroungou camp. For Amboko, these figures are divided into the old caseload of 13,826 and the new caseload of 10,700. Yaroungou camp has no new refugees. Several hundred additional refugees were scheduled to arrive at Amboko by convoy shortly after the PRM visit. UNHCR and NGO staff believed that the figures for the old caseloads at both camps probably overestimate the actual population by 10-20 percent. Neither camp has had a census since 2003. For the new caseload in Amboko, very little demographic data is available. Within the next month, UNHCR plans to register the head of household from the new caseload as a first step to improve registration for the new refugees. UNHCR hopes to do a more in-depth "Project Profile" registration starting in January 2006.

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Amboko: UNHCR's Response and Contingency Planning  
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14. During interviews with field staff, it was evident that UNHCR and its partner NGOs had insufficient capacity and contingency plans at the onset of the new refugee inflows. The UNHCR field office in Gore (Amboko camp) had only two relatively inexperienced international staff and was providing minimal assistance for the old caseload. The visit was prompted by the arrival of an estimated 10,700 new refugees from the Central African Republic to Amboko camp

since June 2005. Amboko and Yaroungou camps now host a combined 40,000 CAR refugees who are supported by UNHCR, Cooperazione Internazionale, African Concern and Africare. Several hundred additional CAR refugees recently arrived at the border. UNHCR believes that refugee inflows will fall in the coming months time of the PRM visit).

15. In July, the UNHCR field office in Gore received a four-person Emergency Response Team from UNHCR/Geneva with protection, logistics, program and administrative international staff. The team has significantly improved basic assistance as well as emergency response to new arrivals. UNHCR personnel from field offices in the eastern Chad and Danamadji have also come to Gore for short-term assignments. The resulting team appears to be both capable and motivated. New arrivals are now transported from the border to the temporary extension of Amboko camp in organized convoys, registered immediately, screened by health and nutrition workers and given a ten-day food ration, a tent and some non-food items (although blankets and mosquito nets have not been sufficient). Basic services in Amboko remain stretched and international standards are not yet being met in terms of health services, nutrition, water, and sanitation. Water availability, for example, is currently only 7-8 liters per person per day. In terms of food aid, for several months prior to October, WFP suffered from funding and resource shortfalls for the southern Chad EMOP and had not delivered the planned rations. At the time of the visit, new refugees were finally receiving a full 2,100 kcal food ration. The old caseload of refugees was receiving the planned ration of 1,800 kcal. While this situation has improved in the short-term, WFP staff warned that funding for this operation is very tenuous.

16. In response to the refugee influx into southern Chad, UNHCR has had to borrow heavily from its contingency stock for Darfur refugees in the east. Most of the non-food items distributed to the new arrivals came from stocks in eastern Chad. In some cases, such as kitchen sets, this has depleted almost the entire stock. A few items, including 5,000 mosquito nets, came from programs in support of UNICEF's non-emergency operations in Chad. UNHCR did not provide blankets to the new refugees from CAR because it wanted to maintain its stock of blankets for the cold season in eastern Chad. The UNHCR senior program officer in N'Djamena noted that UNHCR was obliged to try to replenish eastern stocks using funds earmarked for the new influx in the south, but she was skeptical of receiving sufficient funding to do so. The new influx has had only minimal impact on staffing for UNHCR programs in eastern Chad. The Emergency Response Team was comprised of staff from Geneva or other international offices. The additional staff that came from programs in eastern Chad was deployed only for short term assignments. The head of the UNHCR office in Gore said that the office was developing contingency plans for up to 5,000 new refugees, but he was not able to provide any concrete details regarding the plan. He believes, and UNHCR/N'Djamena agreed, that any new refugee inflows into southern Chad would be small because most of the population in the bordering areas of CAR has already been displaced either to Chad or further inland in CAR.

17. WFP has also had to borrow from stocks in the east to meet emergency food needs of new refugees in southern Chad. WFP currently only has sufficient food stocks to cover needs in southern Chad for one more month. By December, the pipeline for vegetable oil will break. Subsequent breaks

for cereals and pulses are anticipated for January and February. WFP/N'Djamena indicated it would be requesting authorization from USAID/FPP to borrow \$1 million worth of commodities from a recent USD 7 million contribution for the eastern Chad EMOP. Otherwise, no alternatives have been identified.

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Continuing Operations at Yaroungou Camp  
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18. The situation in Yaroungou was much more stable and manageable. From October 13 to 15, PRM visited UNHCR's programs for Yaroungou camp, which has a population of 15,000 refugees, all of whom date back to the 2003 influx. The team found no major concerns with the camp operations. UNHCR and its partners are delivering most basic services at an adequate level. PRM visited the health, nutrition, water and sanitation programs of COOPI, which has a strong team and reasonably well-managed operations. Low vaccination rates were the main shortcoming of COOPI. This was caused by a break in the supply of vaccines on the part of the Government of Chad and has since been rectified. The operations and staff of African Concern (camp management, education, agriculture, community services) were not as strong as COOPI, particularly in terms of community services. For example, they recently established four mills to be operated by refugee committees, but due to poor follow up two of them are no longer operational and the two functional mills do not have resources for basic maintenance.

19. The refugees at Yaroungou camp have a similar ethnic background as the local population, and relationships between the two groups are good. This is reflected in the fact that many refugees have gained access to farmland in areas around Yaroungou camp. African Concern and FAO have helped refugees access 1,700 hectares of land (50m x 50m plots per family) and have provided seeds and tools to boost their production of staple and vegetable crops. Agricultural production could be a cornerstone of self-sufficiency for refugees in Amboko. Refugee leaders said that the land around Yaroungou camp was very productive. UNHCR noted that even if peace comes to northern CAR, at least half of the refugee population will likely stay in southern Chad. Given the refugee access to farmland, UNHCR field staff and the visiting WFP-UNHCR joint assessment mission agreed that reduced rations and perhaps targeted food aid might be feasible for 2006.

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Future Plans for UNHCR and Implementing Partners  
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10. The most appropriate near-term solution for Central African refugees in Chad is clearly local integration and self-reliance activities, and UNHCR is hoping that sufficient funding will be available in 2006 to pursue this strategy. UNHCR recently secured GOC authorizations for a new site at Gondje, situated five kilometers from Amboko, with sufficient land for both the camp itself and agricultural land for refugees. ECHO has agreed to fund the development of the site as part of a two million euro grant to UNHCR and implementing partners. CARE will take over camp management and will develop the site, with refugees being divided into nine to ten "villages" of roughly 1,500 people each with surrounding fields available for cultivation. . MSF will open a health center at Gondje on a temporary basis, with potential handover to COOPI when emergency health conditions have abated.

11. Africare, with the support of UNHCR, has already started a program in vegetable gardening and hopes to implement programs in staple food production for the rainy season starting in May of 2006. PRM staff visited some of the current and proposed locations for Africare's agricultural support programs. Africare has worked with over one hundred groups of refugees to clear ten hectares for vegetable production. An additional forty hectares of land will be used for staple crops (sorghum, rice and maize).

12. In both Amboko and Yaroungou, conditions are ideal for refugee self-reliance within a year or two. Refugees enjoy exceptional hospitality from the local population and support from local and traditional authorities in terms of access to land. With the proper agricultural support (oxen, seeds, and tools), UNHCR and WFP agreed that refugees in Yaroungou could be self-reliant by the end of 2006.

Refugees in Amboko and Gondje could be self-sufficient by the end of 2007.

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## Conclusion and Recommendations

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13. The PRM team offers the following conclusions and recommendations based on their visit to southern Chad:

(a) PRM and other donors should support UNHCR's strategy of local integration and self-reliance for CAR refugees. Refugees are more than willing to work, and only require minimal agricultural support. The donor community, with minimal investment, should act now to prevent a protracted situation of refugee dependence on international relief.

(b) PRM agreed with WFP's assessment that food aid can be reduced for old caseload refugees in 2006 and possibly ended for the Yaroungo population by September 2006 (after the harvest), provided agricultural support is sufficient and a safety net of targeted feeding remains available for vulnerable refugees.

(c) As for immediate food needs of CAR refugees, additional donor contributions are required. USAID may also wish to consider WFP's request to shift some commodities from the well-resourced EMOP for Sudanese refugees (full pipeline through May) for the under-resourced CAR EMOP.

(d) UNHCR should develop more detailed contingency plans for possible new refugee inflows to southern Chad. While large influxes are thought to be unlikely, even smaller inflows of 5,000 - 10,000 will tax UNHCR's current capacity. UNHCR should not continue to rely on stocks from eastern operations to meet emergency needs in the south.

(e) UNHCR's current Head of Field Office in Gore is departing at the end of 2006. UNHCR should quickly identify a strong manager for Amboko and Gondje operations and should also move quickly to fill the new Protection and Field Officer posts recently established. A much stronger UNHCR team is required in Gore to ensure effective emergency response as well as to implement self-reliance programs for CAR refugees.

14. Tripoli Minimize Considered.

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